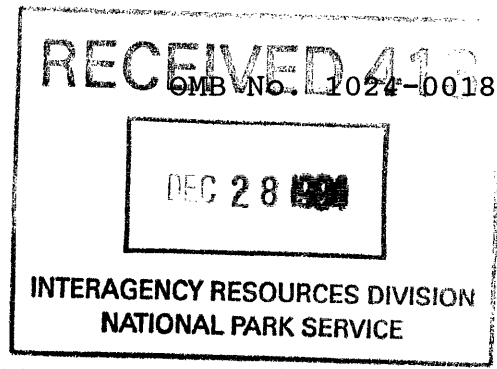


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name Bethel Missionary Baptist Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number SE corner of Webster & Lane streets not for publication N/A
city or town Tatums vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Carter code 019
zip code 73087

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] _____ November 21, 1994
Signature of certifying official Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register [Signature] 1.12.95
 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain): _____

[Signature] _____
Entered in the National Register
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

=====
5. Classification
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious facility

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Gable end church

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT
walls WOOD: Weatherboard

other N/A

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets).

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

Period of Significance 1919-1944

Significant Dates N/A

=====
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)
=====

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder McConnell, E.R., builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Tatums, OK

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>641300</u>	<u>3816510</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Susan Allen, Architectural Historian
organization Oklahoma SHPO date September 19, 1994
street & number 621 North Robinson, Suite 375 telephone 405/521-6249
city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73102

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Bethel Baptist Church

street & number P.O. Box 102 telephone _____

city or town Tatums state OK zip code 73087
=====

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

RECEIVED 413
DEC 28 1988
INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

=====

SUMMARY

The Bethel Missionary Baptist Church is a 40' x 60', one story, wooden framed, clapboard covered, vernacular, gable end church located in the rural town of Tatums, Oklahoma. The building has a front gabled, asphalt shingled roof. At the west end of the roof is a square, pyramidal roofed, enclosed bell tower. With the exception of the bell tower, the building is unadorned. The church is located near the center of the sparsely settled town. It is surrounded on the south and east sides by an unpaved drive and on the west and north by asphalt roads. To the south of the building is the church parsonage, a one story bungalow. Behind the church to the east is the congregation's newer church. Constructed in 1969, this building is a one story, brick, gable end church. The blocks surrounding the church are only partially developed with houses sparsely scattered. The Bethel Missionary Baptist Church has undergone some alterations but still retains its historic and architectural integrity.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Bethel Missionary Baptist Church is a one story, rectangular, wooden framed, vernacular gable end church sheathed with clapboard siding. It measures 40' x 60' and sits on a poured concrete foundation. The front elevation of the church faces west. The unadorned central entrance is 64" wide and is composed of double, wood veneer slab doors. Low concrete stairs lead up to the entrance. Flanking the doors on the far ends of this elevation are single, double hung, one-over-one windows. The north and south elevations each have five, nearly equally spaced, double hung, one-over-one windows. The trim around all of the windows includes a simple cornice. The rear, or south elevation, has two entrances, one toward each end of the building, composed of wooden slab doors. These are accessed by concrete stairs; the stairs to the south entrance have a metal hand rail. At the center of this elevation is a single, double hung, one-over-one window that lights the former chancel.

The building is protected by a front gabled, asphalt shingled roof that has a slight eave overhang. At the west end is a pyramidal roofed bell tower that rises from the main roof. The eaves of this roof have a slight flair. The bell tower is enclosed with clapboard with a small vent in all but the east (rear) side. The tower is surmounted by a metal lightning rod. The original bell is still intact and operable.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The interior of the church is also unadorned. From the front, one enters a small rectangular vestibule. Just to the south of the doors hangs the rope from the bell tower. The vestibule is flanked by small classrooms. The sanctuary area, or nave, composes the largest portion of the interior. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

=====

ceiling in this area is chamfered. Above the ceiling is a full length attic. The walls of the nave are covered with plywood paneling painted white, as is the ceiling. The chancel is at the east end of the building and is flanked by small rooms; the north room is the men's rest room and the south is the women's rest room.

ALTERATIONS

The Bethel Missionary Baptist Church has undergone some exterior and interior renovations. The roof originally featured shake shingles. Around 1950, all of the original double hung windows were replaced by double hung windows that were about 17" shorter.¹ The space below the original windows was infilled with clapboard siding the same width as the original. All of the original exterior doors have been replaced with wooden slab doors. The foundation has deteriorated in places and has been patched with concrete block. On the interior, the walls have been covered with sheets of plywood. The rooms flanking the chancel have been lengthened by approximately 10 feet and converted to rest rooms. The southeast room originally served as the pastor's study and the northeast room was the choir room. The chancel now contains kitchen equipment as the building serves as the congregation's Fellowship Hall. The floor in this area is covered with linoleum; the remainder of the floor is carpeted.

These alterations have not seriously affected the historic and architectural integrity of the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church. The building retains its simple characteristics on the exterior while the interior retains its openness. It continues to maintain integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, and conveys the feeling of its past environment.

ENDNOTES

¹A thesis written in 1950 contains a black and white photograph of the church that reveals that the windows had been modified by that date. Members of the congregation also confirm this date. See Jewell Carter Varner "A History of the Tatums Community," (M.S. thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, 1950), p. 19.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

=====

SUMMARY

The Bethel Missionary Baptist Church is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its historic significance to the early settlement of the all-Black town of Tatums, Oklahoma. The town was founded in 1894 by African-Americans from Indian Territory, Alabama, and Texas. Completed in 1919, the church building is the oldest, intact, public building in the town. It therefore meets Criterion Consideration A as a religious property deriving its primary significance from historic associations.

Historic Background

Following the American Civil War, the Five Tribes of Indian Territory (the Creeks, Cherokees, Seminoles, Choctaws, and Chickasaws) were required by treaties to extend the rights of citizenship to their former slaves. This requirement was imposed on the tribes for their support of the southern states during the war and included allotment of tribal land (from 40 to 160 acres) and sharing in annuities. Three of the tribes did so begrudgingly. But according to one scholar "Choctaws and Chickasaws preferred the removal of blacks from within their domain, and the latter ultimately refused to accept blacks as full-fledged members of their tribe."¹

The availability of land in Indian Territory, and subsequently in the newly opened lands of Oklahoma Territory, afforded Blacks the opportunity to establish their own communities at a time of growing racial unrest. The former slaves of the Five Tribes were joined in these efforts by African-American emigrants from the southern states. Within these communities, the settlers gained control of their lives and found freedom from Euro-American and Native American domination. Prior to statehood in 1907, at least twenty-eight all-Black towns and one colony were established in the Twin Territories; twenty-four towns in Indian Territory, and four towns and one colony in Oklahoma Territory.² The most famous of these towns were Langston in Oklahoma Territory, and Boley in Indian Territory (the latter now recognized as a National Historic Landmark).

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The town of Tatums was established in 1894 by L.B. Tatum in what then was Pickens County, a political subdivision of the Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory. Although one source has indicated that Tatum was born in the Choctaw Nation, he was not enrolled as either a Chickasaw or Choctaw Freedman.³ Tatum and his brother, E.G., were able to induce African-Americans from Indian Territory, Alabama, and Texas to settle in the area. By 1896, the community had a large enough population to warrant the establishment of a post

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 12

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

=====

office with L.B. Tatum as the first postmaster.⁴ Other entities also appeared to meet the needs of this agricultural based, segregated town. These included grocery stores, a subscription school, fraternal organizations, a rooming house, a blacksmith shop, a cotton gin, grist mill, and saw mill, and of course, churches.⁵

A Methodist minister was the first who tried to establish a church in the community but his efforts met with little success. In May 1894, the congregation that became known as the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church was formed. It first met under a brush arbor outside of Tatums. With the coming of fall, the brush arbor was replaced by a log church. The log building was moved to Tatums in 1901 and enlarged to accommodate the growing congregation and to double as the school and Masonic Temple. In 1917, the congregation began to build a new church. It was completed in 1919 under the direction of a local carpenter and church member, E.R. McConnell.⁶

It has been suggested that of all the institutions within the all-Black towns, the church was probably the strongest source of community cohesion and was the one social institution in which Blacks had total control. Besides meeting spiritual needs, the church "provided an opportunity for self-expression, recognition, and leadership and it laid the foundation for social and economic reform in a segregated society."⁷ Although other churches formed in the town, the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church was the only church that gained a stronghold within Tatums. Early census figures for the town are not available but church records reveal that membership varied between 174 and 224 from the early 1920s to the early 1940s. The church became an integral part of the daily life of the town. It not only regulated the spiritual expression of the community, but also the public conduct of its members. Fines were imposed on those who engaged in public intoxication or used foul language, among other transgressions. Because of its prominent location, the church's bell was used to communicate news of importance. Different tones were used to announce a death or illness in the community, a fire, and, of course, to call people to worship. This practice continued at least through the 1940s.⁸

Currently, Tatums has a population of less than 200 people. In the years following World War II, it has experienced the same loss of population and economic base as have many small, rural towns across Oklahoma and the nation. The Bethel Missionary Baptist Church is significant for its association with the early settlement of Tatums and as the oldest, intact public resource in this all-Black town. The building that served as the Masonic Hall was moved to town in 1927. In the 1940s, the second story was removed and the building was moved again. The brick Tatums School was constructed in 1936 as a Works Progress Administration project. A 1983 survey of Oklahoma's all-Black towns

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

=====

revealed that the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church was the second oldest church in these towns and the oldest wood framed church.⁹ The building served the congregation as its church until 1969 when it was replaced by another building. However, it continues in use as a Fellowship Hall. The period of significance for the building is from 1919, the year it was completed, to 1944, to correspond with the fifty year cut-off for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

ENDNOTES

¹Jimmie Lewis Franklin, The Blacks in Oklahoma, Newcomers to a New Land Series, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, p. 4.

²George O. Carney, "Historic Resources of Oklahoma's All-Black Towns: A Preservation Profile," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 69 (Summer 1991): 119.

³Jewell Carter Varner's thesis states that Tatum's family was from Luke Farter, Indian Territory. She may have been referring to Luk-Fah-Tah or Lukfata, a settlement in present-day McCurtain County in southeastern Oklahoma, once part of the Choctaw Nation. Although the 1900 Census for Indian Territory states that Tatum was born in Indian Territory, he was not listed on any of the Freedmen's lists for either the Choctaw or Chickasaw nations. His family could have been among those induced to leave the Choctaw Nation, his claims to citizenship may have been denied by one of the tribes, or he may have chosen not to register with a tribe, or simply was not a Freedman from either tribe. Considering the Chickasaw's reluctance to extend citizenship to their Freedmen, it is curious that Tatum was able to establish an all-Black community within the Chickasaw Nation. The tribe was aware of the community's presence as it issued a license in 1899 to the Tatum brothers for the purpose of engaging in a grocery business in Tatums. Additionally, the Department of the Interior filed a plat of the town with the Chickasaw Nation in 1902. See Jewell Carter Varner, "A History of the Tatums Community," (M.S. thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia, 1950), p. 3; George H. Shirk, Oklahoma Place Names, 2d ed. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, p. 146; 1900 Indian Territory Census, Chickasaw Nation, Vol 10, E.D. 167, Micro-copy No. T-623, Roll No. 1849, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK (hereafter referred to as OHS); The Final Rolls of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory, Prepared by the Commission and Commissioner to the Five Civilized Tribes, 1907; Choctaw National Records, Census and Citizenship, Choctaw Freedmen, 1885-1897, Roll CTN7, Archives and Manuscripts Division, OHS; Chickasaw National Records, Traders #12601, Microfilm CKN-18, Archives and Manuscripts Division, OHS.

⁴Shirk, Oklahoma Place Names, pp. 146-147.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8, 9 Page 14

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

=====
⁵Varner, "A History of the Tatums Community," pp 18-30.

⁶Ibid., pp. 10-15; Kenneth Sayles, Sr., interview with author, Tatums, OK, July 26, 1994.

⁷Carney, "Historic Resources of Oklahoma's All-Black Towns," pp. 127-128.

⁸Cecil Jones, interview with author, Tatums, OK, July 26, 1994. The method of toning the bell has been lost to the community.

⁹Carney, "Historic Resources of Oklahoma's All-Black Towns," p. 127.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Carney, George O. "Historic Resources of Oklahoma's All-Black Towns: A Preservation Profile," The Chronicles of Oklahoma 69 (Summer 1991): 116-133.

Franklin, Jimmie Lewis, The Blacks in Oklahoma, Newcomers to a New Land Series, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1980.

Hill, Mozell C. "The All-Negro Communities of Oklahoma: The Natural History of a Social Movement," The Journal of Negro History 31 (July 1946): 254-268.

Minute Books of the Conference of the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Tatums, Oklahoma, May 23, 1920 to September 22, 1951.

Varner, Jewell Carter, "A History of the Tatums Community," (M.S. thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia), 1950.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 15

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
name of property
Carter County, Oklahoma
county and state

=====

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the northwest corner of the nominated building, proceed 20 feet north to the asphalt paved street; this is the point of beginning. Proceed 80 feet east; turn and proceed 80 feet south; turn, and proceed 110 feet west to a paved road, turn and proceed 80 feet north; turn and proceed 30 feet east to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The legal description at the Carter County Assessor's office described the property as being one acre in the southwest corner of the south half of the southwest quarter of the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 12, Township 1 South, Range 3 West [Indian Meridian] less .23 acres to country road. This description would have included portions of the parsonage, built ca. 1947 and the new church, built in 1969. The verbal boundaries as described above include only the nominated church building and a small parcel of land around it.